

seemed laden with romance. She was divine in that soft moonlight.

By the convulsive heaving of her bosom he knew that she expected to hear the old, old story of love.

"I have played the fool," he thought, "the part of a villain; a brute. As a man of honor I can't tell her that I love her, for I know that my love for Marion is the only true one of my life."

He knew that for some unaccountable reason he had brought their so-called platonic friendship to a climax that evening and what for?—"to break her heart." "God forgive me!" he thought. "I have deceived her cruelly." Well, I must get out of this gracefully and leave early to-morrow morning."

She was still toying aimlessly with the shell. Her quick breathing told him that he must do something or there would be a scene.

What should he say? He had already proposed that they go back. He might say, "Mabel! I have been deceiving you. No! he could not say that, for there had never been confessions of love on either side." Great drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead and he grew painfully embarrassed. He cleared his throat, but could not find words to utter.

"Mabel," he faltered as he approached her again—

A silvery peal of laughter broke the stillness. Two mischievous eyes were looking into his and they were more bewitching than ever.

The attitude of his mind changed instantly, from self condemnation and pity for the girl he was now completely non-plussed; his head swam and he looked at her with an idiotic stare. Suddenly he became fully conscious of the true state of affairs and his face became crimson. "Who — what are you laughing at?" he stammered,

"Nothing," she answered enigmatically. "I take these fits every now and then. I used to get them at college, and my chum, Marion Langford, would sometimes think me a fit subject for a lunatic asylum. You have met her, I suppose? She is in Europe now. What's the matter? You look angry, I hope I haven't shocked you with my laughter. You don't look very well, Victor. I hadn't noticed it before. I believe you need a change of climate. A trip to Europe would do you good."

To all this Victor answered never a word. He had always prided himself upon his coolness upon all occasions, but now he felt he was acting like a fool.